



Indonesia

62 / POP 255 MILLION

Includes ➔

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Best Beaches

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Best Places for Culture

- ➔ Museum Nasional, Jakarta (p157)
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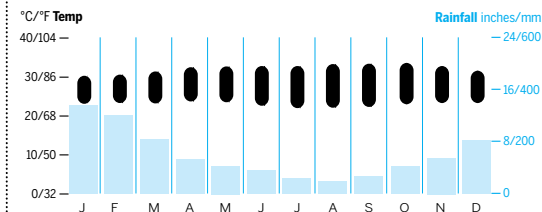
Why Go?

Indonesia defines adventure: the only limitation is how many of its 17,000-odd islands you can reach before your visa expires. Following the equator, Indonesia stretches between Malaysia and Australia in one long, intoxicating sweep. The nation's natural diversity is staggering: snow-capped peaks in Papua, sandalwood forests in Sumba, dense jungle in Borneo and impossibly green rice paddies in Bali and Java. Indonesian reefs are a diver's fantasy, while the surf breaks above are the best anywhere.

But even as the diversity on land and sea run like a traveler's dream playlist, it's the mash-up of people and cultures that's the most appealing. Bali justifiably leads off, but there are also Papua's stone-age folk, the many cultures of Flores and West Timor, the artisans of Java, mall-rats of Jakarta, orangutans of Sumatra and much more. Whether it's an idyllic remote beach, a glorious discovery underwater or a Bali all-nighter, Indonesia scores.

When to Go

Jakarta



Sep–Mar Rainy season; starts later in the south-east. Rain everywhere in January and February.

Apr–Jun Dry days and high temps that aren't withering. Hill towns like Bali's Ubud can be chilly at night.

Aug High season. Prices peak on Bali and the Gilis; book ahead. Remote spots may also fill up.

AT A GLANCE

Currency Rupiah (Rp); 100,000Rp notes can be hard to break

Language Bahasa Indonesia; English in tourist areas

Money ATMs in major centres; carry rupiah for remote islands

Visas 30 days on arrival for most

Mobile phones SIMs (from 5000Rp) sold everywhere; cheap voice/data rates

Fast Facts

Area 1.9 million sq km

Capital Jakarta

Emergency Ask the nearest local for advice

Exchange Rates

Australia	A\$1	9,780Rp
Euro Zone	€1	14,500Rp
Malaysia	RM1	3,170Rp
Singapore	S\$1	9,480Rp
UK	£1	18,680Rp
US	US\$1	13,060Rp

Daily Costs

Budget room 200,000Rp

Meal 30,000Rp

Beer 20,000Rp

Two-tank dive US\$90

Long-distance bus 100,000Rp

Entering the Country

Fly into Jakarta or Bali; flights to Sulawesi, Lombok etc also available. Ferries to Sumatra from Malaysia and Singapore are popular.

Don't Miss

With so many islands, it would be a shame not to get a sense of this vast archipelago by limiting your visit to only one or two – try to see as many as possible. Ferries – never luxurious, often a bit squalid – provide myriad links and truly adventurous island-hopping. Shorten distances with flights on any of the many discount airlines and connect overland dots with buses bombing down the middle of the road at breakneck speeds.

ITINERARIES

One Week

This is a tough one, but Bali is the obvious choice. Spend a couple of days in the south, possibly partying in Seminyak and/or surfing and chilling on the Bukit Peninsula. Head up to Ubud for rice-field walks and intoxicating culture. Catch a fast boat to/from the nearby Gili Islands for a heaving travellers' scene.

One Month

Include your week on Bali and the Gilis, but start on Java and cross through the cultural city of Yogyakarta and the Unesco treasure of Borobudur. From Lombok catch ferries and buses across Sumbawa to Flores, with stops at beaches and dragon-filled Komodo. Finish your time either following the spine of Sulawesi, or head further east for Maluku's idyllic Banda Islands, or track down orangutans on Kalimantan or Sumatra.

Essential Activities

Diving & Snorkelling Diving highlights include western Flores and Komodo, the Gili Islands, Pulau Menjangan in Bali, Pulau Bunaken and the Togean Islands in Sulawesi, Pulau Weh in Sumatra, the Banda Islands in Maluku and the incredible Raja Ampat Islands in Papua.

Spas & Treatments Bali leads the way, with a multitude of affordable salons and spas in all the main traveller centres.

Surfing All the islands on the Indonesian archipelago's southern side, from Sumatra to Timor, get reliable – often exceptional – and sometimes downright frightening surf. Many start at the legendary breaks of Bali's Bukit Peninsula, such as Ulu Watu.

Hiking In Java, organised hiking centres on some spectacular volcano hikes, such as Gunung Bromo and the Ijen Plateau. There's more variety in Bali: the wonderful Gunung Batur region and the hills around Munduk, which offer walks amid cool hillside forests, spice plantations and waterfalls. Gunung Rinjani on Lombok is a dramatic and rewarding hike. On Sumatra, try the jungles of Bukit Lawang. The Baliem Valley in Papua is popular; Tana Toraja has fabulous trekking opportunities through Sulawesi's spectacular traditional villages.